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TUNISIAN PAPER STRESSES FAILURE OF STALINISM IN SATELLITES,
 SEES SHIFT FROM SOVIETIZATION, RUSSIFICATION

Marcel Chaminade

There is definitely something wrong in the Soviet empire, something that no longer works properly. Cracks are beginning to be heard not only in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Rumania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, but also in the USSR itself. In the various republics, "imported" administrators are being relieved of their duties en masse and replaced by local personnel, with a view to allaying the revolutionary ferment which is manifesting itself. We must not conclude, however, as some US circles unwisely do, that the Communist world is in for an early collapse. We have not reached that point yet.

On the other hand, it is a fact that the Kremlin finds itself compelled to soft-pedal its policy of systematic sovietization, and even its policy of Russification. The spectacular measures taken in Eastern Europe could only have been taken with the consent of and on official instructions from the Soviet leaders. We wonder whether the new policy, which is beginning to shape up, is a mere tactical retreat designed to enable the Soviets to overcome their current difficulties. We also wonder to what extent the promises made by them will be fulfilled and to what extent the announced reforms will be implemented. But it is too early to form an opinion on these points.

The explosion of popular discontent which has occurred among Moscow's vassals was caused by their catastrophic economic situation and the appalling and ever worsening living conditions of their peoples. Events in the Satellite countries clearly show the complete failure of Stalinism.

The political and economic changes made by the Satellites constitute a repudiation of the Stalinist principles and methods of planning. In the light of the facts, they have been compelled to acknowledge that the Stalinist theories and practices were leading to famine and to paralysis of the production apparatus.

- 1 -

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Not only has the Kremlin-dictated policy failed to attain any of its stated goals, but it has actually brought about results which are diametrically the opposite of those envisaged in the plans. Far from increasing agricultural production, land collectivization and the kolkhoz system have caused it to decline to such an extent that Hungary and Rumania, normally exporters of foodstuffs, now are unable to produce sufficient food even for themselves.

To satisfy the demands of a frenzied industrialization, it has been necessary to draw more and more from farm manpower. All efforts have been concentrated on expanding heavy industry, to the detriment of light industry and consumers' goods production. Thus, we have the paradoxical result that while more and more plants and factories are being set up, the shortage of industrial items of prime necessity, consumers' goods, foodstuffs, clothing, household articles, etc., becomes more and more acute. Meanwhile, the standard of living of the people in the Satellite countries is declining very sharply. The only one to benefit from this situation is the USSR, which has been receiving from the Satellites huge amounts of various commodities at very low prices.

This system of pressure has ended up by cracking. All parts of the structure have begun to totter. It has been necessary to loosen the vise, halt collectivization, slow down the development of heavy industry, and abandon at least partly the five-year plans, which were too ambitious.

Stalinism in the Satellites is hurt to the quick, and its principles and methods are being abandoned. In fact, the forced repudiation of the Stalinist policy of systematic sovietization and Russification may have repercussions even within the USSR itself. The question is whether, and by what means, the Soviets will be able to halt the present trend and limit its effects.

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- 2 -

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